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ABSTRACT

Principals' behaviors and the reasons for and consequences of their behavior are the focuses of this review of major published empirical research on public school principals. Appended to the paper is a 70-page bibliography of doctoral dissertations, conference papers, and other writings on the principalship that were not reviewed. The author first discusses the different images of the principal that guide research and the various research methods used. After reviewing early principalship studies of the 1950's and 1960's, he examines the variables studied and not studied in the areas of principal characteristics, such as demographic and personality traits; principals' problems, including time use and relations with people and groups; and principals' perspectives or point of view, involving the problem- and management-oriented, face-to-face nature of the job. Ten neglected avenues for principalship research are identified, including school characteristics, private schools, managerial roles, external school environments, and job socialization. The paper's last sections suggest future research directions and discuss the literature's implications for principal training and selection. The appended bibliography of principalship research covers 10 topical areas, among which are multivariate studies and studies of principal effectiveness, characteristics, roles, and selection. (RW)

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RESEARCH ON PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

A REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Introduction

The review on which this report is based was guided by three questions: What do public school principals do? Why do principals behave as they do? What are the educational and organizational consequences of the activities of public school principals? The results of reviewing the empirical research literature indicates that more is known about what principals do than either why they behave in certain ways or what consequences follow their behavior on the job. The review itself was limited to major published reports of research on public school principals and is thus limited in scope. The review did not, for example, include in-depth examination of doctoral dissertation studies or reports generated by State agencies or by professional associations (except for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals). Appendix A lists the authors and titles of doctoral dissertations, papers presented at various professional association meetings, and other research documents considered relevant to but not specifically included as part of this review.

Images Guiding Research

There are many conceptions of the role of principal. Those dominating the research literature include principal as: leader; instructional supervisor; administrative decision-maker; organizational change-agent; and conflict manager. While most principals probably incorporate elements associated with each of these images in their actual behavior on the job, the most prevalent assumption reflected in the research literature is that of the principal-as-

leader. Although a number of recent studies indicate that managing the school organization and juggling a broad range of administrative details is more descriptive of what principals actually do (Crowson & Porter-Gehrie, 1980; Martin & Willower, 1981; Wolcott, 1973 for example), the vast majority of research studies are dominated by a view of the principal- as-leader, tending to operationalize that image in terms of scores on the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (Halpin & Winer, 1957), the Executive Professional Leadership Scale (Gross & Herriot, 1965), the situationally contingent Least-Preferred Co-Worker Scale (Fiedler, 1967), and a host of researcher-developed scales.

In short, most studies appear to be guided by idealized conceptions of what principals should be like rather than conceptions grounded in observation of actual behavior on the job. While there has been an increase in recent years in the number of basic descriptive studies of school principals at work, the leadership image continues to influence the questions studied by researchers. The intent in calling attention to the images held by researchers of school principals is not to denigrate one view as opposed to another, but rather, to suggest that while "leadership" may be what we hope to see reflected in the behavior of school principals, over-emphasizing this dimension of the role systematically obscures many other enduring and critical dimensions of what it is that principals do on the job, and tends to detract attention from a wide range of organizational and environmental factors influencing efforts by the principal to work effectively within the school enterprise.

Approaches to Studying Principals

The primary method used in the study of school principals is the survey questionnaire. While this method is very helpful in studying certain kinds of research problems, it permits only a static and cross-sectional view of the principal, thus missing the very critical and essentially dynamic character of the role—principal intentions, actions, and the antecedents and consequences of what it is that principals do on a day-to-day basis. Questionnaire studies generally have focused on ascertaining the perceptions held by others regarding various facets of what principals do, or should be doing, as they enact that role. This approach is useful for certain purposes, but has yielded little insight regarding what principals actually do, why they behave in certain ways, or what happens as a result of those behaviors.

While static methods dominate research on the principal, there has been an increasing tendency over the past decade to employ methods of study more suitable to capturing the dynamic and multivariate character of the principalship. Open-ended interviews and on-site observations of principals at work have increasingly been used in recent years, and the results produced by these methods have increased our awareness of what the role actually entails. These are positive developments and can be expected to make a major contribution in shaping the direction of research in the future.

Case studies and longitudinal investigations are practically non-existent in research on the school principal. It is hypothesized that as researchers and policy-makers become increasingly aware of the

critical impact a school principal can have on the nature of learning and the quality of life in schools, more effort will be made to employ such methods in the study of school principals. As researchers gain a better understanding of the relationships between what principals do, how they enact that role, and how the behavior of the principal influences and is affected by students, staff, organizational arrangements, and environmental conditions, case study methods and longitudinal approaches to studying the principalship will be employed with increasing frequency.

While there has been more research on the principalship during the past decade than in previous periods, the bulk of the studies are aimed neither at the solution of pragmatic policy problems nor at the generation of theory related to understanding the principalship. The basic descriptive work noted earlier is a very positive step in these directions, but there has been little research that contributes to the development of significant policy or powerful theoretical frameworks. While there are exceptions to this rule to be discussed later in this report, most of the research that is conducted is not guided by theoretical or policy puzzles to be solved.

There is research guided by various theoretical concepts, but most of this work merely validates in varying degrees the generalizability of one construct or another to the principalship and various social phenomena associated with that role. The validation of constructs from leadership theory, role theory, organizational theory, and management theory have enabled both researchers and policy-makers to gain limited insights into the nature of school organizations and elements of the principalship, but this research has not yielded

particularly useful or powerful explanations of principal behavior.

As basic descriptive studies provide guidance regarding the identification of important variables and relationships, and as the data collection and analysis techniques of researchers become more sophisticated, research designs will be employed that permit the investigation of questions which can indeed produce results that will make a meaningful contribution to the development of theory and policy germaine to the principalship. The generally incomplete descriptive base and the resource limitations characterizing research on the principalship inhibit advances of the sort that are needed. Approaches during the past decade reflect the emergence of a more microscopic orientation than has been the case in earlier years. To the extent that this trend continues to flourish, research on the principalship increasingly will become informed by theoretically important and policy-relevant questions.

Early Studies of School Principals

Scientific study of the public school principal began with the National Principalship Study at Harvard University in 1959. Research during earlier decades was limited to atheoretical status surveys sponsored by the National Education Association. These surveys began in 1928 and have been conducted on a fairly regular basis once each decade. While such studies generate data regarding the demographic characteristics of principals as an occupational group, and categorize the opinions and perceptions of principals regarding a variety of job-related issues, it was not until other studies were completed

during the 1960's that a theoretically useful body of knowledge about the principalship began to accumulate.

It is somewhat ironic that 20 years after the early study by Hemphill, Griffiths, and Frederikson (1962), researchers are still plagued by a host of problems that historically have impeded systematic study of the principalship: (1) the lack of useful criteria by which to reliably differentiate good from poor administrative behavior, (2) the paucity of concepts with which to describe administrative behavior, (3) the operational difficulties inherent in actually attempting to observe the on-the-job behavior of administrators, (4) the reality that every administrative situation differs in some respect from every other situation, and (5) the problems of ordering and analyzing large amounts of data that are difficult to quantify (pp.4-5). While there has been only a slow growth in the knowledge base during the 1960's and 1970's, researchers and funding agencies have more recently begun to realize the importance of the school principal as a critical agent of local, state, and national educational policy. Not since the inception of The National Principalship Study in 1959 and, more recently, initiatives by the National Institute of Education and several private philanthropic organizations, has scientific research on the school principal been recognized as important to the development of knowledge and practices useful in enhancing the conditions of learning and improving the consequences of teaching for our nation's youngsters.

Four studies during the 1960's laid a basic foundation for research in the ensuing decades. While these four studies by no means reflect all of the research during that period, the questions studied

and the results that those studies generated presaged much of the focus of inquiry in the 1970's and early 1980's. The 1962 study by Hemphill et al., noted earlier, engaged a national sample of 232 principals in an administrative simulation intended to illuminate the nature of the job, factors important in the selection of principals, and ideas and materials useful in the study and training of principals. The results of their research indicated that women were more prone than men to exchange information, maintain organizational relationships, and respond to outsiders, and that men were more prone to complying with suggestions made by others and to analyzing the administrative situation; that women more often than men tended to ask subordinates for information; that superiors' ratings on knowledge of instruction and teaching methods and techniques tended to be higher for women than men; that women tended to do more work, discussed problems more with superiors, and used information in available background material somewhat more frequently than men; and that men made more concluding decisions, followed pre-established structures more often, and took a greater number of terminal actions than women principals (pp. 330-44).

While these findings are not exhaustive of their research results, the findings by Hemphill et al. suggest that very important differences may occur between women and men principals. In addition to factors such as those already noted, the study indicates that general mental ability, verbal fluency, and qualitative differences in previous experience are salient factors in discriminating among principals. With the exception of a 1976 study by Gross and Trask,

there has been little research aimed at extending and refining the results of this early study by Hemphill et al.

Several years later, Gross and Herriot (1965) published a study of the Executive Professional Leadership of 175 elementary principals drawn from 40 large school systems. As part of the National Principalship Study initiated in 1959, this research examined the role of the principal in improving the instructional performance of teachers. They defined Executive Professional Leadership (EPL) "as the effort of an executive of a professional staffed organization to conform to a definition of his role that stresses his obligation to improve the quality of staff performance" (p.8). Several major results discussed by Gross and Herriot are: a positive relationship between EPL and staff morale, the professional performance of teachers, and pupils' learning; the smaller the school enrollment, the greater the principal's EPL; principals whose superiors strongly endorsed their efforts to improve teaching methods exhibited more EPL than those whose superiors did not; principals who had the greatest amount of formal education did not provide the greatest professional leadership to their teachers; and sex and marital status showed no significant relationship to the EPL of principals. Gross and Herriot suggest four personal characteristics of principals which may have some predictive value in selecting principals who promise a high degree of Executive Professional Leadership: (a) a high level of academic achievement in college, (b) a high degree of interpersonal skill, (c) the motive of service, and (d) the commitment of off-duty time to one's job (pp. 150-57).

Their study was conceived in part as an effort to clarify the validity of the historically controversial assumption suggesting that principals displaying a high degree of professional leadership will have schools that are more productive and staffs experiencing higher morale. Gross and Herriot conclude that their research supports that assumption and undermines the view that school principals should provide only routine administrative services to their staffs (p. 151).

A third major study completed during the 1960's but receiving little attention by researchers since that period, is Foskett's 1967 study of the norms, or rules, surrounding the elementary principalship. Foskett administered a 45-item role norm inventory to 22 elementary principals, 367 teachers, 7 school board members, 603 community members, a select population of parents, and 56 community leaders in one school district. The results of his study indicate a great deal of ambiguity associated with the role and a low level of agreement between the principal and others for several critical norms (p. 95). Foskett suggests that "whenever a position is interstitial and no well defined guidelines exist for the occupant and for others with whom he interacts, morale may suffer, performance may be less effective, and others may become critical" (p. 95). Foskett makes a number of other observations, suggesting that "if the actual views of the central administration are different from what the principals think they are, the behavior of the central administration may appear capricious and unpredictable....to the extent the principals are not aware of the views of the central administration, the influence of the central administration will be minimized" (p. 95).

While there have been hundreds of studies of principals' and others' perceptions of the school principalship, there has not been any major research since 1967 which seeks to refine, clarify, or extend the results of Foskett's study in a systematic and reliable way. Yet, it is clear that the "rules" have changed considerably during the past 15 years. The advent of collective bargaining, legislative mandates in the areas of desegregation and special education, and changing community demographics and student expectations are examples of several of the changes that have occurred which, hypothetically, could be expected to influence norms associated with the principalship. The prescriptive literature has reflected these changing conditions, but the research literature has not.

A fourth study conducted during the 1960's was a rather unique investigation by Lipham and Francke (1966) of the nonverbal behavior of principals and military executives. Forty-two promotable and nonpromotable principals and 18 Navy executives identified as innovators and noninnovators were studied in their regular work settings. The researchers classified nonverbal behavior into three dimensions; structuring of self, interaction, and environment. The promotables and innovators differed in important ways from the others: "the offices of promotable, as contrasted with nonpromotable, principals contained numerous personal items; nonpromotable principals allowed themselves to be interrupted more often than promotables; status symbols differed among promotables and nonpromotables; and promotables in contrast to nonpromotables took pains to extend themselves and be courteous and helpful to visitors" (pp. 103-106). The researchers suggest the importance of nonverbal behavior and its influence on the

"images" projected to others, and that inferences drawn by others based on nonverbal cues from principals can be an important factor in how effectively principals communicate to others.

Although there were other important studies conducted during the 1960's, these four illustrate a number of issues that are salient to understanding the focus of research during the 1970's and early 1980's and suggest areas of inquiry that have only lightly been tapped but which promise to be fruitful avenues of study in the years ahead. The Hemphill et al. study is useful in the hints it offers of the importance of personal characteristics of principals and the consequences of such differences among principals in the execution of their role responsibilities and their interactions with other critical actors on the school scene. Gross and Herriot's study systematically sought to identify activities relevant to the role of the principal in the improvement of the quality of staff performance, and offered empirical data challenging the efficacy of the argument that school principals should provide only routine administrative services to their staffs. Foskett's study illuminated the highly ambiguous character of the principalship and the results of normative disparities for the person "in the middle." The effort by Foskett to understand the highly normative world of the principal anticipated the increasingly divergent and often conflicting values and perceptions characterizing the teaching force, students, parent and nonparent community groups, and even various members of the administrative reference group. Lipham and Francke's observational study of principals at work foreshadowed a number of more microscopic studies of principals, and hinted at a

complex range of personal and interpersonal factors critical to understanding the principalship.

While research during the past decade has not systematically built upon the results of earlier studies, researchers have increasingly focused upon what principals actually do on the job, and have sought in a limited way to understand relationships between the performance of principals and various group, organizational, and environmental conditions. These directions represent a major departure from the more limited focus of researchers during the first half of the century.

Principals at Work: Problems, Perspectives, and Personal Characteristics

On a more microscopic level researchers are just beginning to generate useful descriptions of what principals actually do on the job, in specific school contexts. Although there has been an increase in the number of studies examining relationships between principal performance and other factors, few studies systematically relate performance to organizational contexts, outcomes, or environments. More is known about the problems that principals face than about principals themselves, and very few studies reflect any effort to understand what person-specific variables might usefully be incorporated into descriptions or explanations of principal behavior. This is somewhat ironic given the dominating assumption that the principal, as an individual actor on the school scene, is a critical determinant of organizational culture and instructional outcomes.

The Principal-as-Person

Although the status surveys conducted by various professional associations do not produce research results having explanatory power, i.e., they tend to be atheoretical and do not seek to examine relationships among various factors bearing on the principalship, they do offer insight into a variety of demographic characteristics of principals and do generate data regarding principals' perceptions of job-related obstacles and problems. At the secondary level, the NASSP sponsored study by Byrne et al. (1978) reveals that the secoudary principalship continues to be a male-dominated profession; a larger percentage of principals have completed formal education beyond the Master's degree than was the case a decade ago; there are fewer younger and fewer older principals in the field now than in the past; large high school principalships tend to be held by older principals; principals serve in one position for an extended period; and, while it is their choice as a final career field for many, increasing numbers of principals aspire to higher level positions than was the case in 1965 (p. 18).

In a related sub-study of 60 "effective" principals selected through a reputational process, Gorton and McIntyre (1978) report that 53 of the 60 were white males; 53 of the 60 were married; 18 held doctorates; 30 were involved in teaching and teaching related experiences for six or fewer years prior to entering school administration; and the most common route to the senior high school principalship was the assistant or vice-principalship, although 15 had served as elementary or junior high principals prior to their appointment to the

senior high school principalship (pp. 5-9). The researchers conclude that "the majority of principals interviewed are hard-working, dedicated individuals, concerned about students and involved in improving opportunities for learning in their schools. These principals are also people oriented, their strongest asset being an ability to work with different kinds of people having various needs, interests, and expectations. They seem to understand people, know how to motivate them, and know how to deal effectively with their problems" (p. 55).

Pharis and Zachariya (1979), studying the elementary principalship with the support of the NAESP, offer this description of the typical elementary school principal: "He *is* a white male, 46 years old and married. He has a master's degree, and his professional morale is high. He feels secure in his job and sees the elementary school principalship as his final occupational goal....He is a registered Democrat but tends to be conservative in his political outlook" (p. 1). The typical elementary principal has held that role for 10 years, five of those in their current assignment, having spent all 10 years in their current district. He had 7 years of teaching experience prior to entering administration, and has worked an average of 20 years in the field of education, typically spending some of that time as a secondary school teacher, coach or assistant elementary school principal (p. 19).

A more recent study of the middle level principalship sponsored by the NASSP and conducted by Valentine et al. (1981), reveals the typical middle school or junior high school principal is a white male between the ages of 45 and 54, with only 6% being women. The middle level principal entered his first principalship from an assistant

principal position after serving from 4-14 years as a teacher. Seventy-four percent had formal graduate work beyond the master's degree, with more females than males having earned a doctorate. Over half of the respondents reported they were still in their first principalship, and over one-third said they would be happy to remain in their present position as a middle level principal, with about 25% of the sample indicating a position at the central office level as their career goal (pp. 1-33).

These four studies indicate a fairly stable, white, male-dominated group characterizes the principalship, with most individuals having completed formal study beyond the master's degree level. The results reveal little about the personal characteristics of principals, although the Gorton and McIntyre (1978) report on effective high school principals suggest qualities such as "hardworking" and "people-oriented." There are a host of person-specific characteristics known to be associated with effective leadership in general, and it is unfortunate that so little is known about the "person" in the principalship. Future studies would be well-advised to incorporate such variables as need for achievement, drive for responsibility, initiative, task orientation, interpersonal skill and sociability (Stogdill, 1974) in research on school principals.

This is not to argue for a traitist approach to studying the principalship. However, denying the influence of individual differences and attributing all variation in the performance of principals to situational or environmental factors ignores both the results of research in other occupations and common sense. Yet, few studies of the principal include individual characteristic variables, excepting

race, sex, and varying indicators of mental ability; even these have not been examined systematically in spite of earlier findings suggesting that mental ability, gender, and other personal characteristics are significant discriminators among principals (Gross & Herriot, 1965; Gross & Trask, 1976; Hemphill et al, 1962).

Several other studies illuminating qualities of the principal-as-person warrant mention. Although none of the studies sought initially to identify or investigate personal characteristics of principals, the results are nevertheless revealing. Goldhammer et al.'s (1971) description of the difference between two kinds of principals and schools, characterizes principals in the "beacons of brilliance" schools as charismatic, enthusiastic, confident, service oriented, and hardworking; principals in the "pot-holes of pestilence" schools were characterized as weak leaders, unenthusiastic, laissez-faire, and serving out their time (pp. 1-2). Wolcott's (1973) depth study of a single elementary principal reveals much about that individual's qualities as a person: his gregarious nature, a problem-centered orientation, a super-dedication, a wish to perform exceedingly well, and a desire to tackle and contain problems (pp. 177, 316). Silver's (1975) study wherein she found that the principal's level of conceptual ability was related to interactions with staff, and Lyons and Achilles (1976) report of the relationship of mood states of principals to their decision-making behavior hint at the salience of personal characteristics for performance on the job. Blumberg and Greenfield's (1980) study mention qualities like initiative, confidence, security in themselves as persons, a high tolerance for ambiguity, analytical ability, and other individual characteristics as

common to the eight men and women principals they studied. While other studies exist from which one might infer the importance of such person-specific characteristics as those mentioned above for discriminating among performance patterns of principals on the job, there has to date been no systematic or large-scale effort to study the principal-as-person. Researchers know very little about the backgrounds of principals, their personality orientations and other individual characteristics, or about the relationship between such factors, various organizational and environmental factors, and actual performance on the job.

Principals' Problems

More is known about the problems faced by principals than about the principals themselves. While this is true, research on the principalship nevertheless tends not to be problem-centered in a pragmatic sense, nor do researchers focus in any depth on policy issues germaine to the principalship. When policy issues are studied, the policy itself rather than the principal as policy-maker or policy-implementor is the focus. Although the trend during the past several decades has been for researchers to study phenomena only indirectly related to pragmatic problems germaine to the principalship, several association sponsored studies depart from that norm. While the results of these studies are not very specific in a scientific sense, they are nevertheless instructive.

Byrne et al.'s (1978) study of the senior high principalship indicates that time taken up by administrative detail, a lack of time, and variations in the ability of teachers are the three most serious

problems faced by secondary principals (p. 25). Valentine et al.'s (1981) study of middle level principals identifies time taken by administrative detail, apathetic or irresponsible parents, and problem students as the top three "roadblocks" preventing them from doing their jobs (p. 43). Pharis and Zachariya (1979) report that elementary principals identify the dismissing of incompetent staff, managing student behavior, and declining enrollment as serious problems they face on the job (p. 97). While it is difficult to know in more precise terms what these three sets of "serious" problems mean for principals on a day-to-day basis, further study on a more microscopic level could reveal the operational "meanings" of these problems in terms of how they are responded to by a principal and what influence they may have on other dimensions of the principalship.

The general issues reflected in these problems tend to get reflected in other studies of principals. Goldhammer et al.'s (1971) study indicated that the largest number of problems experienced by elementary principals were those associated with the instructional program (p. 66). Wolcott's (1973) study suggests that most of the problems faced by the principal are "people-problems." Salley et al. (1975) report that within the four major job dimensions identified in their occupational analysis of the principalship, the largest category involved the principal's relations with people and groups, a category including 10 of the 17 basic job dimensions identified (p. 29). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) indicate that the four elementary and four secondary principals they studied faced relatively common problems, although they handled those problems in similarly effective yet different ways. The major problems these principals found were those

associated with organizational maintenance activities and concerns about program change. In a study of 10 principals, Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) identify five major problem areas: time inadequacies; enrollment decline; challenges to authority; community expectation; and accommodating role expectations (pp. 51-65).

While the research results noted above are somewhat vague and ill-defined, they illustrate the kinds of problems that principals report. With the exception of the studies by Byrnes et al. (1978), Pharis and Zachariya (1979), and Valentine et al (1981), there has been little systematic effort by researchers to identify and understand the job-related problems faced by principals. Although these three studies and the others that have been mentioned do not offer definitive results or suggest clear directions for either researchers or educational policy-makers, the research cited here suggests that a problem-centered line of inquiry may be very useful in clarifying and understanding the principalship. Research aimed at identifying and specifying the operational and personal meanings of job-related problems offers a useful but virtually untapped strategy for describing and understanding the work of school principals. Identifying and understanding the meaning of such job-related problems would offer a useful reference point for researchers interested in studying how a principal responds to a problem, why he responds, and the effect of that response. Further, it may enable researchers to more fully understand the part that intervening variables related to organizational structure, group culture, and environmental conditions play in the identification and resolution or management of those "problematics" viewed as serious and enduring by school principals and

others. The results of such studies also offer school principals and educational policy-makers the prospect of findings that are practically significant in their view as consumers of research on the school principal.

Principals' Perspectives

While a dominant trend in research on school principals has been to study principals through the use of a variety of questionnaires and concept-specific instruments of one sort or another, an emerging strategy among researchers has been to study their actual behavior and to obtain in-depth personal accounts of their intentions and activities. This effort to "get closer" to the principal has enabled researchers to paint a more microscopic and more dynamic picture of the principalship. Such studies are illuminating and are essential to advancing our understanding about what questions and problems may most profitably be pursued and studied at a higher level of generalizability.

Wolcott's (1973) ethnographic study of one principal is extremely revealing and needs to be replicated at the elementary school level. Similar studies need to be conducted at the middle and senior high school levels. Wolcott reveals that the "greatest part of the principal's time is spent in an almost endless series of encounters, from the moment he arrives at school until the moment he leaves. Most of these encounters are face-to-face, tending to keep the principalship a highly personal role" (p. 88). Almost 65% of the principal's day was spent in face-to-face interaction with teachers, parents, central office staff, students, and others (p. 92). Wolcott notes that the

"daily routine" of the principal is reflected in three major categories of activities: receiving requests and handling problems; orienting and greeting; and taking care of the building (pp. 123-74). Wolcott describes the principals' perspective as:

> The immediate containment of any and every actual and anticipated problem that might possibly disrupt the "smooth" operation of the school. More than this, he also attempted to give at least token recognition to virtually every event, comment, or complaint that came to his attention...a conscious, almost tangible quality of super-dedication to try to do anything for everybody....remained ever on-call and available for action....guided by an unwritten rule that is at once the raison d'etre for the role of the elementary school principal and the perfect obstacle to ever achieving a radical change in that role: every problem is important. (p. 316).

In contrast to Wolcott's ethnographic study of one elementary principal, Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) conducted a depth-interview study of four elementary and four secondary principals. Their results parallel Wolcott's observation that the principalship is a highly personal role involving a great number of face-to-face encounters with others, but unlike the principal in Wolcott's research, those studied by Blumberg and Greenfield did not indicate that every problem was important in the sense that the principal made it his/her "own" problem; the principals they studied worked deliberately to teach teachers and others to solve their problems so that they would not become the principals' "problem." Blumberg and Greenfield report that "success seemed to depend largely upon their ability to listen to and dialogue with members of these [teachers, students, and parents] reference groups. The degree of the principal's interpersonal competence, particularly those skills related to establishing and maintaining desired identities, both for the principal and for others, serves

to mediate much of the principal's work-world activity, and as a consequence is probably pivotal in differentiating the more effective from the less effective principal" (p. 198). Blumberg and Greenfield present a narrative portrayal capturing each of the eight principal's personal views of themselves as principals, and report that the success experienced by each principal is related to:

> (1) their individual commitment to the realization of a particular educational or organizational vision; (2) their propensity to assume the initiative and to take a proactive stance in relation to the demands of their work-world environment; and (3) their ability to satisfy the routine organizational maintenance demands in a manner that permits them tc spend most of their on-the-job time in activities directly related to the realization of their personal vision. They do not allow themselves to become consumed by second-order priorities. (p. 208)

These eight principals are quite different from each other in their general "world view" and in terms of how they present themselves to others (the images they hold for themselves as principals—the Organizer, the Value-based Juggler, the Authentic Helper, the Broker, the Humanist, the Catalyst, the Rationalist, and the Politician), yet they share a number of skills and orientations to work that enable them to be different and effective as principals.

Peterson's (1981) observation study of two urban elementary principals offers evidence regarding the brevity, variety, and apparent fragmentation characterizing the work of principals. He observes that,

> (1) the work of principals consists of short tasks and the day is filled with sometimes several hundred separate activities; (2) elementary principals do an enormous variety of tasks...must interact with a wide range of individuals...and work on many activities with differing cognitive demands; and (3) the work of elementary principals is fragmented...the activities of principals are regularly interrupted by other tasks, problems, or crises. (pp. 2-6)

Peterson concludes his report by emphasizing that "before we can effectively select and train administrators we must make sense of the work they do. To this end, broad generalizations and heroic idealizations of the job are counterproductive" (p. 11).

Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) intensively observed 10 urban principals and identified a variety of "coping strategies" that those principals used in coming to terms with the day-to-day exigencies of their jobs. In response to the problem of inadequate time the principals engaged in on-the-spot decision-making; focused on one aspect of a situation while letting others drop; and maintained a presence in the school by making quick tours, dropping in and out of classrooms, and generally remaining sporadically visible throughout the school. In terms of coping with the problem of enrollment decline principals would loosely interpret enrollment policy; court potential school dropouts; and actively engage in the recruitment of students by promoting activities which increased the attractiveness of one's school. In responding to challenges to his or her authority the principals applied rules flexibly; established a routine for patrolling the school and its grounds; and hastily closed off any matters that threaten the principal's image of authority. In dealing with diverse parent and community expectations principals channeled participation and access of groups and individuals; remained flexible and adaptive in response to parent requests; and focused or directed external demands so as to buttress the principal's authoritative position within the school system.

Strategies for coping with multiple and sometimes conflicting role expectations included redefining the supervisory role into other endeavors deemed more likely of getting results; expanding their role to fill in gaps presented by the structure of the organization; adjudicating differences and conflicts within and between the school staff and outsiders; maintaining control over decision-making by delegating very little responsibility to subordinates; and seizing opportunities to blame "downtown" and share with others the snafus and mistakes emanating from the district office and not of their own making (pp. 51-65).

While the study by Crowson and Porter-Gehrie is not definitive regarding the antecedents and consequences of these various coping strategies, their results highlight the kinds of problems with which principals deal, and illustrate a variety of ways in which principals respond to those demands. They conclude their report by pointing out the need to more adequately understand the "organizational conditions and the incentives or rewards to which the principals are responding" (p. 66). The relationship between the context of the principalship and the intentions, activities, and consequences of their actions is not understood. It seems clear however, given the range of responses and perspectives towards the role that are reflected in each of these studies, that the principalship is complex, that conditions vary across context, and that principals may enact a range of strategies and behaviors as they come to terms with the requirements of their work situations.

Morris et al.'s (1981) observation and interview study of 16 elementary and secondary principals in urban schools indicate that

individual principals can and do exercise a great deal of discretion in decision-making and in enacting other aspects of the principalship. Their study results parallel those by Wolcott (1973) and Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) that the principalship is a highly interpersonal role characterized by a great deal of ambiguity and, hence, latitude for decision-making. The principals studied by Morris et al. were able to exercise considerable discretion in the interests of "their" school constituents. The highly personal "involvement" which seems to shape these principals' orientation to the role is an intersting finding and one which warrants further study. Is it a characteristic of the occupation, or is it some sort of anomoly associated with particular individuals or kinds of principalships or schools? Is it a valid basis for differentiating more effective from less effective principals, or does it make no difference? The principals studied by Morris et al. used discretion in: (1) monitoring what was happening throughout the school; (2) protecting the school system from the uncertainties of an unpredictable clientele; (3) adapting organizational policies to school needs; (4) realizing their personal goals; (5) acquiring power relative to the larger system; (6) adapting to the reward system of the district; and (7) protecting their school from interference in its instructional endeavor. (pp. 217-220).

Martin and Willower (1981) studied the managerial behavior of five high school principals through the use of the structured observation technique employed by Mintzberg (1973) in the study of managerial work. While there are limitations to the method and the conception of managerial work on which it is based, the technique enabled the researchers to systematically describe how principals spend their

time. Of the 13 primary activities engaged in by the principals, over 60% of their time was spent in desk work (16%), scheduled meetings (17.3%), and unscheduled meetings (27.5%). More than 65% of their time was spent in activities that involved either face-to-face interaction with or being in the "presence" of others in the school. Both of these general results support the earlier findings in other studies that the principalship is a highly interpersonal world of social encounters with teachers, students, parents, and others. In a subsequent study of five elementary principals, Willower and Kmetz (1982) used the Mintzberg method and found that among the 13 activities being observed, the largest percentage was the category of unscheduled meetings (32.5%), followed by desk work (18.6%), and scheduled meeting (10.3%).

Both of these studies add support to the general observation that the principal's world is largely one of face-to-face interaction with others, and suggest that the greatest difference between the elementary and secondary principal is that the elementary principal spends 10.3% of his/her time in scheduled meetings compared to 17.3% for the secondary principal. The results of studies such as these are descriptive and even at that, may be somewhat misleading. For example, while data exist regarding the relative distribution of activity over time, they do not help one understand whether a certain amount of time is too much or not enough. Further, there is no data of a qualitative nature regarding what actually transpires during the course of a given activity; i.e., the time spent may have been very productive and worthwhile, or it may be spent unwisely or with poor results. Future research may clarify these questions and thus add data useful in

interpreting the meaning and assessing the efficacy of spending a certain amount of time in one activity or another. Research results at present do not give any guidance regarding what relationship, if any, obtains between how a principal spends his or her time, why this is so, and what consequences follow those behaviors.

The final study to be noted in this selective review of research on school principals is the work by Salley, McPherson, and Baehr (1979) which resulted in the development of the Job Functions Inventory for School Principals. It is discussed last in an effort to direct attention to the need to clarify and more comprehensively understand the role of the public school principal. A basic premise guiding the study was that the principal's definition of the job would vary with different operating conditions, different environments, and differences in the composition of the staff, the student body, and the experience and backgrounds of the 619 principals studied. The study departs from the usual research on school principals in its approach and in its conclusion. The study views the principalship as an occupation, seeks to identify the primary job dimensions, and integrates those with the personal characteristics of principals, school characteristics, and ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics of students, parents, teachers, and the school community. It is a large scale multivariate study seeking to identify critical job dimensions and their relationship to the other factors noted. It is not characteristic of research on the principalship, either in scope or design, but the approach it reflects is a very promising strategy vis a vis efforts to understand the work of principals. If replicated, refined, and further validated it can offer extremely useful guidance to those

interested in training, selecting, developing, evaluating, and studying school principals.

The Job Functions Inventory contains 180 items factored into four basic job dimensions: relations with people and groups; curriculum; personnel administration; and general administration. The study collected data on three additional sets of characteristics of the principals and their work setting: personal characteristics of principals; school characteristics; and ethnic and socioeconomic status characteristics of the school and community (p. 29).

An analysis of variance interrelating 17 Job Function Inventory dimensions and 21 personal, school, and ethnic/socioeconomic status characteristics resulted in 84 relationships which were statistically significant at the .001 level of confidence or better. Salley et al. summarize three major findings as follows:

> Variables relating to type and size of school accounted for the greatest number of differentiations in the way principals described their jobs, although socioeconomic status and ethnic composition of student body and teaching staff made a sizeable contribution.
>
> Personal characteristics of the principal produced the fewest differentiations. However, there were some differentiations based on race and sex that should not be overlooked.
>
> The age of the principal and years in the present position yielded no significant differentiation. (p. 30)

Salley et al. offer a number of important insights in discussing the implications of their research findings:

> Principals are captives of their environments;...unless some environmental characteristics, particularly those related to the organization of the school and school system are changed the principal rarely will be a change agent and his or her work will be routinely predictable....the size of the school system, size of the school, and number of grade levels in the school are organizational variables that influence the principal's definition of his or her work and militate against his or her emerging as an innovator....ethnic and

> socioeconomic characteristics play a significant part in defining the work of the principal....the particular race or sex of a principal is not a determinant of the work of the principal....that the older principal is wiser than his young counterpart receives no substantiation from this inquiry....experience is not a differentiating factor in the principal's description of his or her job. (pp.34-36)

Salley et al. found what they feel may be four different kinds of approaches principals use in response to their work:

> The principal who places a high priority on the involvement and support of groups....the principal who emphasizes the evaluation and improvement of student academic performance....the principal who stresses the development of qualified teaching staff through personal involvement....the principal who stresses a managerial approach, involving tight fiscal control and close working relationships with the central office. (p. 32)

Salley et al. note that principals successfully performing in different kinds of principalships are likely to exhibit different interests, skills, and leadership styles: "principals of smaller schools are more involved with the students themselves....principals of larger schools more closely resemble managers in other institutions dealing with staffing and union issues and, at policy levels, with personnel issues" (p. 32). They conclude from their analysis of the principalship that the job itself tends to be defined by incumbents in terms of administrative behavior rather than instructional functions, and that traditional conceptions of the principal as a change agent or instructional leader increasingly conflict with overwhelming pressures to be a "production manager" (pp. 37-38).

Their study is a major contribution to the literature on the principalship and stands out as an example of powerful survey research that yields meaningful results informing our understanding of the role and the multiple factors shaping performance. In stark contrast to

the usual surveys of principals, Salley et al.'s research is informed by theory, seeks to understand relationships among multiple forces shaping the role, and employs sophisticated data analysis techniques. The results are important, relevant, and broad in scope and should prove quite useful to researchers and policy makers interested in the work of principals. Finally, unlike most studies of the principalship, school level was included as a study variable.

The following general observations conclude this section of the report. Research on the public school principal has consistently found that the principalship is highly interpersonal, full of ambiguous and conflicting expectations, permits considerable latitude in responding to situational exigencies and individual dispositions, and presents incumbents with a diverse range of problems seemingly beyond their direct influence. The historical controversy between principal-as-instructional leader and principal-as-administrative manager has not been resolved, and research results suggest that an enduring challenge to the principal is the necessity of balancing a "cluster" of competing expectations in the face of situational forces mitigating their satisfactory resolution. Elementary principals have been studied more frequently than principals at other levels, and researchers have tended not to be guided by major questions of policy or theory. The image of the principal as "leader" dominates the literature, although recent studies have begun to address other functions, and also have begun to focus attention on organizational and environmental features shaping the work context and the performance of principals. Atheoretical questionnaires dominate study methods, although sophisticated multivariate studies reflecting a theoretical

orientation are increasingly prevalent. Observational studies of the actual work of principals are gaining credence and have made major contributions to the literature.

Research and the development of theory about the principal are at an infant stage, and the necessary synthesis of existing research which characterizes the advance of any scientific inquiry has yet to become a focus of attention among students of the principalship. While much has been learned during the past several decades, the results lack organization and integration. Much new ground has been broken, but there has been little effort to replicate earlier results or to engage in the hard work of putting together pieces of the puzzle that are already at hand. In a fashion, research on the principalship parallels the work of principals in its fragmented, disconnected, and highly varied character.

Neglected Dimensions in Research on School Principals

As suggested in the preceding section, research during the past decade has contributed substantially to our understanding of the principalship in general, and to the explication of particular theoretical concepts germaine to the work of educational administrators at the middle-management level. Promising trends have developed and these will, if pursued, contribute basic descriptive understandings which are fundamental to the development and testing of theory relevant to understanding administrative behavior, its antecedents and consequences, at the school building level. While advances have been made toward more complete understanding, there are at least 10 avenues

of inquiry related to the principalship which appear important yet have received only little attention to date.

The first of these concerns the study of principals at different school levels. While much research has focused on the elementary principal, there are no recent depth studies of the junior high/ middle school and secondary school principalship. Differences in the student culture, school curriculum goals, faculty orientations, and administrative staffing arrangements may well determine the nature of the problems faced by the principal as well as the character of the principal's response to the requirements of the situation. The three levels themselves offer a natural basis for focusing research, yet this has not occurred. There are virtually no studies of similarities and differences among elementary, middle/junior, and senior high principalships.

A second avenue of inquiry, building on the first, is the comparative analysis of different levels of the principalship in large and small school districts, perhaps further differentiated in terms of their urban, suburban, or rural character. Most research has focused upon the urban and suburban principal, yet the majority of school principals work in what might best be characterized as more rural school districts. What similarities and differences are there between such principalships? Do rural elementary principals have a role similar to that of urban and suburban elementary principals?

A third direction that has recently received some attention but warrants more, is the principal in a private school setting. Again, what are the similarities and differences between these and other kinds of principalships? A parochial school principal with a predomi-

nantly religious faculty has quite a different group culture than does either a parochial school principal or a public school principal with essentially a lay faculty. Do such differences have consequences for the principal and, ultimately, for children? There have been too few studies of the principal-in-context aimed at understanding situational factors and their relationship to principal behavior.

A fourth dimension that has been examined in only a very limited way is the study of the personality characteristics of principals, their value/belief system, the consequences of gender, and a host of other person-specific variables. The "person qualities" of school principals do appear to be related to their general orientation to work, and to have consequences in the areas of decision-making, communication, and organizational change, yet there has to date been no systematic study of such phenomena.* The school principalship is a particularly people-oriented type of role, yet little is known about the principal-as-person or the individual characteristics associated with effective management of the school enterprise. Are principals with a high need for achievement more effective than principals with a low need for achievement? Are verbal fluency and sociability important for all types of schools, or are they more essential for the

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* While the "traitist" approach to understanding and explaining behavior has limitations, it is important to recognize that certain traits, personality characteristics, or "person qualities" do influence behavior. Research on the principal, as a leader in general, tends to ignore the efficacy of the idea that behavior results from the interaction between person and situation (Stogdill, 1974).

elementary principal than for principals at other levels? Stogdill's (1974) work identifies particular "person qualities" germaine to research on school principals that seeks to understand why some principals are more effective than others in similar situations.

A fifth element which has only recently begun to be studied is the managerial role of the principal, and in particular the organizational maintenance function performed by the principal. There is very little known about the factors related to a principal's successful or unsuccessful integration of this stabilizing and coordinating function with activities related to instructional leadership and organizational improvement. For example, in more instructionally effective schools the principal appears to have been able, unlike his counterparts in more typical schools, to have successfully integrated demands for stability with those of improvement. If the principalship is a role requiring the management of a cluster of different demands, how does one account for the fact that some principals manage these demands in a balanced and integrated way while others seem only to be able to achieve a skewed and fragmented result, usually in the direction of stability and maintenance of the status quo? What managerial activities do principals engage in, how, and with what consequences?

A sixth dimension warranting more attention is the external school environment and its influence on the school principal. That environmental conditions have changed and will continue to change is clear. Yet little systematic attention has been paid to how this has affected the school principal. While the school boundary is highly permeable relative to other types of organizations, little is known of the consequences of this permeability for the school principal.

Community norms and the characteristics of student populations shift more and more rapidly, frequently becoming more heterogeneous, yet the impact of such changes in circumstances on the principalship is not understood. More is known about conditions within the school than of conditions external to the school; however, schools and school principals clearly do not exist in a social, economic, or cultural vacuum.

The seventh area of inquiry to be mentioned is the highly interpersonal world of the principal at work, evident particularly in the principal-teacher dyad. The basic administrative relationship is a dyad, and practically no attention has been given by researchers to this fact of administrative life. It is through person-to-person relationships that most of the work of school principals is accomplished. In a very insightful essay, Coladarci and Getzels (1955) suggest that three dimensions of this relationship are of crucial importance: "The first of these is the authority dimension. What is the source of superordinate's dominance and the subordinate's acceptance of this dominance? The second dimension pertains to the scope of the relationship. What is the effective range of roles and facilities covered by the ralationship? The third dimension is the affectivity dimension. What is the nature of the personal interaction between the participants in the relationship?" (p. 16). Although these questions were raised over a quarter of a century ago, researchers have only recently begun to investigate them. The effectiveness of the school principal in the development and implementation of policy at the school site level is executed through two basic administrative relationships: the principal-teacher dyad and the superintendent-principal dyad. These are the critical units through which the

work of principals is accomplished, and research during the past decade has not focused upon either of these in any depth. A dyad can be conceptualized as a small group. The literature on group dynamics is quite extensive, but rarely does research on the school principal draw on that knowledge base (Cohen et al., 1980; Homans, 1950, 1961; Thelen, 1954, for example).

An eighth avenue of inquiry concerns ethics, or the moral character of school principals. This goes beyond the psychological dimension and refers to the standards of conduct by which school principals guide their actions. Schools in a sense have become moral agents of the community and family, and may become increasingly instrumental in shaping ideas about the nature of justice, virtue, the ideal nature of human character, and the ideal ends of human action. While Counts (1932) challenged the education establishment with the possibility of building a new social order through the schools, little study of the principal has been guided by such concerns. Schools are not value-free, and school principals may well be instrumental in modeling character or shaping a moral ethos in the school. Do the ethics of school principals have consequences for instruction, learning, and the nature of schools? Research on good schools by Grant (1982) suggests that the presence of a strong positive school ethos in moral and intellectual terms positively influences the work of teachers and students.

A ninth line of research concerns the emotional dimension of the principalship. Research by Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) suggests that the "emotional toxicity" (Levison, 1972) of the school work environment may have consequences for how principals respond on the

job. Does the nature of the role and how it is defined by the demands of the system have emotional consequences for the principal? Is an emotionally "dead" principal less effective than one who is emotionally "alive"? How do principals experience anger, and what are the consequences of how they act when they are angry. Are emotionally authentic principals perceived more favorably or as more effective on the job than principals who mask their emotions and true feelings? The job of being a principal appears to be emotionally taxing, yet we know little about this aspect of the principalship.

A tenth area of inquiry that could be quite illuminating is the socialization and role-learning of school principals. While several studies of the transition from teaching to administration have been conducted (Blood, 1966; Greenfield, 1977, 1982; Griffith, 1965, Mascaro, 1973; Ortiz, 1982), there has been very little systematic study of the assistant principal role even though it is this role which usually provides the transition for middle/junior and senior high school principals. The broader literature on the sociology of work and occupations (Goslin, 1969; Pavalko, 1971, for example) and particularly the literature on organizational careers (Glaser, 1968; Schein, 1978; Van Maanan, 1977, for example) are rich with research results and conceptual frameworks germaine not only to the study and understanding of the transition points and developmental stages and plateaus of being a "career principal," but also offer valuable insights into the problems of selection, training, and professional development on-the-job. Researchers and policy-makers interested in understanding the school principal will find this literature useful.

Directions for Research

The ten lines of inquiry suggested above grow out of the three larger questions posed at the beginning of this report. What do principals do? Were one to describe the behaviors, activities, interactions, and sentiments of school principals, what would one say? Researchers have begun to answer this question in recent years, and descriptive texts such as those by Wolcott (1973), Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), Morris et al. (1980), Crowson and Porter-Gehrie (1980) and others are the basis for the answer to that question. These descriptive texts supplemented by large-scale multivariate studies such as the occupational analysis based on the Job Function Inventory developed by Salley et al. (1979) offer promising strategies.

Why do principals behave as they do? This is an extremely complicated question, and the answer requires extensive understanding of relationships between the activities of individual principals and the organizational contexts in which those actions occur. Two fields of knowledge offer a basis for answering this question. The first is the vast empirically validated literature about the psychology of individual behavior, and the second is the almost as extensive literature on the social psychology of small groups and organizations. There have been limited efforts to integrate organizational/ environmental context variables in research on school principals (Caldwell & Lutz, 1978; Hatley & Pennington, 1975; Miskel, 1977a & b; Poppenhagen, 1980; Salley et al., 1979; Schmidt, 1976; Silver, 1975, for example), although most of the studies noted do so in a very minor way, the

exception being the work by Salley et al. (1979). In reviewing the research literature virtually no published studies were found which included psychological or group theory as an integral and explicit basis underlying the research questions posed. This is unfortunate given the empirical richness of the literature in those two areas.

What are the consequences of the activities and social interactions of principals? This, too, is a question that is extremely difficult to study, and research on the school principal is just beginning to address the problems in assessing effects and their causes. There are both design and criterion problems in studying phenomena related to this question. For example, what criteria does one use in assessing the effectiveness of a principal, teacher, student, or school. Some researchers establish criteria associated with student achievement (Edmonds & Frederickson, 1978), while others focus on issues of vandalism, absenteeism, staff morale, organizational climate, leader behavior, and a host of other prospective indicators. The difficulty in part is that researchers need to know something about both process and output and their relationship; research on the principalship is in its infancy in these areas. Posing the issue somewhat differently, research tells us more about what children learn than about how to achieve or alter the educational and organizational arrangements related to specific learning outcomes. Normative theories abound on this matter, but little systematic research results exist that give guidance to principals or others concerned about this problem. The case study approach offers a useful strategy. For example, a partnership between school personnel and an interdisciplinary team of researchers might study one school or a school district

over an extended period of time. This approach to research is promising but problematic given the vagaries affecting institutional relationships and research funding priorities. These obstacles are not insurmountable, however, and probably depend more upon the priorities and commitments of individuals for their resolution than upon the availability of resources from private or federal agencies. A good example of inquiry seeking to understand the complex relationships between the behavior of principals, the school's organizational context, and the influence of certain management practices on childrens' schooling experiences is the program of research on the instructional management role of the principal being conducted by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (Bossert et al., 1981). While this project is still in the beginning stage, it promises to make a substantive contribution to our understanding of principals and the antecedents and consequences of their work.

Implications for Training and Selection

What are the implications of the research on school principals for practices related to selection, training, and development? In answering this question one faces problems similar to those discussed previously regarding the relationship between process and product. Because there is precious little systematic knowledge available on these matters, the discussion to follow may well raise more questions than answers.

In the matter of selection, research does not unequivocally confirm that factors such as age, race, sex, experience, and formal

training are predictive of effectiveness as a principal. While early studies indicate that men and women principals differ in their responses to the requirements of an administrative situation, the consequences of such differences are not clear. Although intelligence or general level of mental ability are associated with performance, there again are no clear-cut guidelines. Research further suggests that the number of years of teaching or prior administrative experience of principals is not a useful predictor. Finally, the limited research on the effect of training in the form of graduate study suggests there may even be a negative relationship between perceived effectiveness and number of credits of graduate study. In short, results are mixed regarding the indicators one might reliably depend upon in the selection of a school principal.

Although the evidence is sparse, some research results suggest we may have been asking the wrong questions in efforts to understand the problems of selection. For example, Stogdill (1974) and others assert that the best predictor of leadership is prior success in this role. Building on this idea, selection criteria might profitably focus on such issues as the degree of correspondence between the requirements of the situation for which an individual is being selected and the success that person has had in meeting similar requirements in a previous situation. For example, the situational demands that a teacher must satisfy in working with children in one classroom are quite different from those a principal must satisfy in working with adults in a school. Research by Greenfield (1977), Blood (1966), Mascaro (1973), and others suggests that a critical factor in acquiring the requisite skills and attitudes for administration is not

the number of years one has been a teacher but, rather, is a function of what one has learned about working with adults at an organizational level during that period. For example, an administrative intern or an assistant principal may learn much or little that is relevant to the situational requirements of a particular principalship, depending on the nature of the learning opportunities in those roles.

Selection criteria often address what one expects or hopes will be attained educationally or organizationally in a given school situation. However, selecting an individual solely on the basis of the similarity between conditions in their current work situation and what you hope can be achieved in your situation is not a guarantee that a good match will be made, given that the real task involves changing the school from its current state to the desired state. The critical question, and the one rarely asked, concerns the likelihood of the person hired having the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the desired state. Phrased differently, it often takes one set of skills to maintain a given state of affairs and another set to achieve that state. Thus, returning to the problem of prediction in selection, the crucial correspondence issue concerns making a match between the ability and disposition of a candidate and what the requirements are that have to be satisfied in the new situation. Experience in doing effectively what it is that one will have to do in a given job is the best predictor of success in the selection/matching process. Research on the assistant principal role has been neglected in the past, and more attention to studying this role as it influences preparation or "readiness" for the principalship is warranted.

In making a selection decision three basic questions need to be answered: (1) Does the candidate possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for the demands of the new situation? (2) Is there evidence that the candidate has in fact effectively applied the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a previous setting that corresponds with the new situation? (3) Is the candidate sufficiently motivated to perform in a manner that effectively meets the demands of the new situation?

Research results on the formal training or preparation of school principals are meager. Pitner (1982) offers a good review of this literature suggesting that while much is known about the content of graduate education, little is known about the relative effectiveness of one process versus another, or about factors facilitating the transferability of learning/knowing to acting and behaving in accord with what has been learned. Assuming the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes are taught and learned at a cognitive and to some degree, at an experiential level, one may reasonably hypothesize that successful transference from a formal learning setting to application in a live work setting will depend on the frequency of practice opportunities that correspond to the actual work setting.

The internship and the field experience or practicum in educational administration preparation programs are intended to facilitate transference and application. Research suggests that the more frequent the practice opportunities, and the higher the degree of correspondence between the practice settings and actual work settings such as the principalship, the greater the likelihood that effective transference and successful application will occur. For example, if a

position requires success in 10 dimensions in order for the job to be done effectively, one would presume that an individual having had extensive practice opportunities on all 10 dimensions would experience more success than a person having had limited practice opportunities in only three or four of the 10 dimensions.

Specifically, one might examine the practice opportunities (assuming sufficient opportunity has been given to learn the required knowledge and attitudes) given to prospective principals in helping teachers teach better, in diagnosing learning problems experienced by children, or assessing the effectiveness of teachers or instructional programs. If there are few such opportunities, individuals are likely to be less successful at performing such tasks effectively than if there are many opportunities.

The research reviewed in this report suggests the work of principals is highly interpersonal in character, that it is fragmented and varied, that organizational maintenance demands consume a major portion of the principal's attention, and that activity directly related to improving instruction is very limited. One might construct a problem or task oriented training curriculum designed to prepare principals to address these and other dimensions of the job. Some training programs reflect such a focus in their effort at "competency-based" preparation (McCleary), but the dominant practice in institutions of higher education is less focused regarding the particular competency areas addressed. In any event, there has not been extensive evaluation of the efficacy of such efforts, and there is no conclusive research evidence available which might reliably enable one

to determine the appropriate substance or distribution of competencies requisite to being an effective principal.

Without a major increase in time and other resources devoted to training, the efficacy of preparation programs would seem to depend primarily on the selection of students. Formal training can extend and enhance an individual's repertoire of knowledge, skills, and values, but it is unlikely that any fundamental changes will accrue under present training conditions. The vast majority of prospective principals in formal preparation programs are not intensely or exclusively focused on their preparation. The typical student goes to school on a part-time basis driven by a variety of motivations, only one of which might be to deliberately gain a particular set of knowledge and skills to enable them to be effective principals. Under such conditions the competing influences of existing norms in their regular full-time work setting are likely to detract from and may even directly contradict what has been learned in a formal sense.

Another set of issues pervading the profession and having a major impact on preparation programs is the historical conflict within the professorship, and in the administrative reference group, regarding the emphasis given to what might generally be termed as instructional leadership and school management. There are convincing normative arguments on both sides of this question, and the empirical evidence supporting those views is mixed. Recent studies suggest it is inappropriate to pose the problem as a dichotomy. School principals must attend to the organizational maintenance tasks inherent in managing any organization, and research suggests that principals who place a

strong emphasis on the improvement of instruction do influence the achievement of children in a positive way.

The reality is that principals must successfully juggle a "cluster" of different demands if they are to be effective. Research suggests that a skewing of attention toward organizational maintenance tasks occurs in most schools, and that this skewing is related to one or more of the following factors: the expectations of superiors; the norms of teachers; dispositions and abilities of principals; the size of the organization and of the in-school administrative resources; characteristics of the student population; and aspects of the larger environment within which schools operate. Research indicates that some principals are able to effectively address the "cluster" of tasks alluded to earlier, in spite of adverse conditions related to the factors just mentioned, and that most principals are not able to do so. Understanding why this occurs and what might be done about it depends in part on the results of research addressing these various factors and their interrelationship. Training programs may be able to produce principals better prepared to face the challenges awaiting them, but it is important to recognize that forces larger than the individual principal are at play. School principals and their superintendents are key actors in enhancing the principalship and the productivity of schools, and it is through "informed" action on their part that this can occur.

Although the evidence is not overwhelming, the results of research on these matters are available. Graduate preparation programs for principals could be more effective were they to reflect the results of research in their training efforts. In a similar way,

school policy-makers involved in selection and in decisions affecting the role of the principal could inform their actions by what is known about these matters, and thereby enhance the effectiveness of school principals. The unfortunate reality in both instances, however, is that agents responsible for selecting, training, and supervising principals usually do not pay much heed to what is known about these matters. Those who do are the exception, and it is likely that the students or principals in their charge will acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively meet the demands of the principalship.

Conclusion

Three general observations conclude this report. First, existing research on the school principal needs to be organized and synthesized, and new avenues of study need to be initiated along the lines suggested earlier. There is much that is known about the school principalship, but what we know is not well organized. To the extent that we fail to organize what is known, we will have difficulty understanding the meaning of new results or the efficacy of the direction of research being pursued. Replication, longitudinal case studies, and large-scale multivariate studies are needed to verify and extend our understanding of the principalship. Second, research, selection, and training need to be more adequately informed by the actual problems principals confront on the job. The school principalship is the basic position through which educational policies are implemented, and an empirically-based problem-centered approach in the activities of selection, training, and research will enable us to move

beyond the myths and overly-simplistic conceptions of the principalship and all that it entails. Third, occupational analyses and validation of the Job Function Inventory such as that developed by Salley et al. (1979) are needed to clarify the principal's role, to offer an empirically-based reference point for evaluating the performance of principals, and as a guideline to personnel responsible for recruitment, selection, and training. Extending this strategy promises the possibility of clarifying critical similarities and differences in the elementary, middle/junior, and senior high principalship, and the identification of critical contextual, human, and environmental factors intervening in and influencing the activities of principals and the overall productivity of schools. Finally, clarification of the critical job dimensions will facilitate the development of evaluative criteria and indicators that can be used to assess the effectiveness of school principals, and will provide guidance to researchers seeking to understand the connections between the behavior of principals, aspects of the organizational/environmental context in which they work, and the consequences of schooling for children.

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APPENDIX A

A Selected Bibliography of Research on the American Public School Principal

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V. PRINCIPAL ROLE STUDENTS: PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS

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